

# MAPPA MUNDI

St John Ambulance is guided by the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, or more simply, the Order of St John. Note that the word "Jerusalem" is especially mentioned in the Order's official fully-stated title.

The members the original Order of St John were called Hospitallers and they were based in Jerusalem. They provided the inspiration for our present Order.

Jerusalem was central to many peoples' thoughts 900 years ago and not only in relation to the original Order of St John. This focus is reflected by the now 700 year old dramatically illustrated Mappa Mundi. "Mappa Mundi" can be translated as "Map of the World" or more correctly as "Cloth of the World". The map is on permanent display in Hereford Cathedral in England. It is large; 1.58 metres from top to bottom and 1.33 metres from side to side and is drawn on a single sheet of vellum, a type of leather made from calf skin.

The map is quite different to one drawn today. The Mappa Mundi has east at the top, north on the left, south on the right and west at the bottom. The world of 1300 is like one great big land-mass divided by waterways. The map-maker did not have the benefit of knowledge gained by Christopher Columbus, who didn't sail across the Atlantic Ocean until 1492, or Captain Cook who didn't reach Australia until 1770.

In broad terms the map recognises just three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa. It features 420 cities or towns, and a number of castles including those of Conway and Caernarvon built by Edward I after his conquest of Wales in 1284. There are 65 images of people, animals or plants, 15 images of Biblical events and eight of mythical creatures. The map was produced by Richard of Haldingham or Lafford, parishes of the English county of Lincolnshire. Its date of production recently has been estimated as about the year 1300.

The dark area near the middle of the map represents the Mare Medi Teranea ... the Mediterranean Sea. It is quite deliberate that in the very centre of the map is a relatively large circular design representing Jerusalem. Jerusalem was regarded as central to the world both geographically and spiritually.

The Mappa Mundi is claimed to be the only large map of the world dating back to the Middle Ages. It is not purely geographical in nature but reflects natural history, Biblical stories, and other points of interest to act as a teaching aid for its viewers.

Given our modern view of what a map of the world should look like, the Mappa Mundi, produced 200 years after the first Crusade, makes us wonder how those on their way to Jerusalem in those early days ever managed to get there!

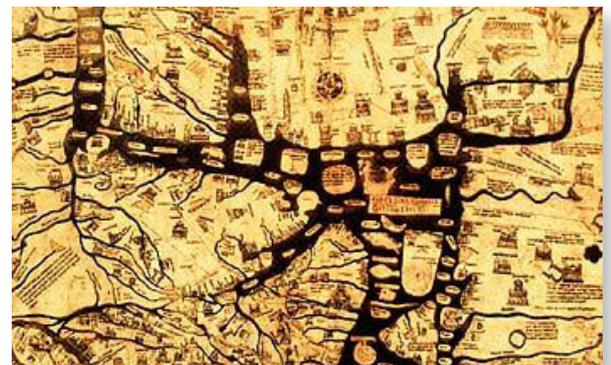
**Brian Fotheringham**  
Chairman

## Next question:

What is the curiously named library at Hereford Cathedral called?



## historical happenings



## Answer to the previous question:

Adelaide's statue of King Edward VII is on the northern side of North Terrace, near the library.



The St John Ambulance  
**Historical Society**  
of South Australia